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## Point Reyes National Seashore News Release

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For Immediate Release

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### Point Reyes Invasive Species Removal Programs Gain Momentum

This week, Point Reyes National Seashore reached a pinnacle in its effort to eradicate invasive pampas grass from park boundaries. With recently completed work, the park has treated 99% of pampas grass populations in the park. In the past two weeks, crews removed the last major population of the invasive non-native pampas grass from steep, crumbling cliffs in the heart of the Philip Burton Wilderness area. This work culminates a long-term effort - the park has removed 14,000 plants since 2001. Park staff worked with the National Park Service California Exotic Plant Management Team, ascending and descending on fixed ropes several hundred feet above the ocean to remove this last major population.

During the same period additional cliff work was accomplished on the bluffs along the Point Reyes Headlands removing invasive iceplant from rare plant habitat. The work in the Lighthouse area, which will continue next week, is contracted with local arborists as part of a series of coastal restoration projects designed to control highly invasive plants threatening rare plant and wildlife habitat. The crews have now cleared 30 acres of spreading iceplant. The lighthouse area is being treated because of its existing phenomenal plant diversity. Many botanists consider it one of the most biologically diverse areas in California.

These invasive species are being removed to allow native plants to flourish. After habitat loss, invasive or exotic species are considered the greatest threat to native plant heritage. In the Abbotts Lagoon area, where European beach grass has been removed, there has been a threefold increase in native plant cover and species richness. Additionally, three new nests of the endangered western snowy plover were found.


Worldwide biodiversity, the degree to which species and ecosystems vary across the globe, is diminishing at a rate unparalleled in the earth's history. Biological invasion by alien species is thought by scientists to be one of the biggest threats to this diversity. Increased globalization and travel, along with unfortunate management choices in the past century, have resulted in intentional or inadvertent introductions of non-native animals to every continent on the planet. Some of these introductions have failed but many have resulted in colonization by invasive nonnative plants. These exotic species have successfully competed with native species and in many cases have out-competed the native species, with the end result being severe impacts or extinction of the native species.

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Point Reyes National Seashore supports over 900 species of flowering plants this represents nearly 18% of the flowering plant species in California. However, many these species are non-native and invasive. The Seashore also supports 46 special status plant species, many of which are directly affected by invading non-native plants. Five of these species are on the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's, federally endangered list. Population Action International and The Nature Conservancy have determined that the California Floristic Province, which Point Reyes is part of, is a "global biodiversity hotspot" one of 25 terrestrial regions of the world where biological diversity is most concentrated and the threat of loss most severe. Within central California, the original extent of flora remaining is only 25%, with only 9.7% protected in parks and preserves. While this protects these habitats from development, additional effort is required to protect them from invasive species.

Across the country, over 2.6 million acres of national parklands are infested with invasive plant species. As part of the *Natural Resource Challenge*, a five-year action plan that outlines numerous improvements needed in natural resource stewardship, Exotic Plant Management Teams are being funded and implemented in strategic locations throughout the country. The California Exotic Plant Management team serves 12 parks in California.

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